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Pollard Spy Case Deviated From Policy, Israeli Insists

BY GAYLORD SHAW, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—Israeli Justice Minister Yitzhak Modai, assailing allegations that his government conducted widespread spying in the United States, said Tuesday the espionage case of Jonathan Jay Pollard was a "one-time deviation" of Israeli policy.

"Not only are they lies, they are completely unfounded," the Israeli official said of assertions that Pollard, a Navy intelligence analyst who pleaded guilty this month to selling U.S. intelligence secrets to Israel, was part of a broader Israeli espionage operation.

"If you . . . intimate this is the tip of the iceberg, where is the iceberg?" Modai said at a news conference at the Israeli Embassy here. "If you intimate that there are other cases, where are the other cases? If you suggest that Israeli authorities knew about it, where is the proof?"

The Israeli Cabinet member, in the United States for talks with Secretary of State George P. Shultz, Atty. Gen. Edwin Meese III and other officials, said the Pollard case has been "blown up beyond its scope" and expressed dismay that it might strain the "special relationship" between the United States and Israel.

May Issue Statement

Saying he hopes that "an effort will be made to accelerate the inquiry," Modai also disclosed that the Israeli government may issue an official statement "in the near future."

"I wish and pray that current events . . . complete their course and get out of the way of the important type of relationship that we have developed between our two countries, not only for the benefit of the two countries, but also for the benefit of the free world," he said.

Pollard, 31, is awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty to charges that he turned over U.S. intelligence data to his Israeli contacts from 1981 until his arrest last

November. His wife, Anne L. Henderson-Pollard, pleaded guilty to lesser charges of unauthorized possession of classified documents.

Modai said the Pollard case was "an unauthorized, regretful deviation, a one-time deviation from the basic policy of the state of Israel."

Denies Ongoing Spying

U.S. investigators, who declined to be identified, have said Israeli espionage in the United States may have been more extensive than the single case. Asked at the news conference if he could state "categorically today that there is no Israeli espionage operation ongoing in the United States," the Israeli official said: "Yes, I can. I confirm that."

Four Israelis were named as unindicted co-conspirators in the Pollard case, and Modai said three of them have been fired from their jobs.

Rafael Eitan, a longtime Israeli intelligence official whom U.S. investigators say ran the Pollard operation, was "fired on the spot" from the intelligence service and later given a job with a state-owned corporation, "not in reward for anything, but in consideration for past services . . . and the fact that he was being fired from a very high position," Modai said.

Israelis Recalled

Science attache Joseph Yagur and secretary Irit Erb were recalled from their positions with the Israeli Embassy in Washington after Pollard's arrest Nov. 21, Modai said. A fourth Israeli named as an unindicted co-conspirator, Avi Sella, was recently promoted from colonel to brigadier general, but Modai said the promotion was made by the Israeli armed forces and not by the Cabinet.

As for press accounts that Eitan and Sella had been rewarded for their roles in the Pollard affair, Modai said: "I do see the problem of appearances . . . but what appears is not necessarily the real facts."